

Considerations for Reviewing Small Organizations

All applicants are reviewed in the context of their individual key factors. In the case of small organizations, size is a significant key factor. While an organization's size does not affect the applicability of the *Criteria for Performance Excellence*, it does need to be factored into the assessment of an applicant's responses on its Award application. Therefore, Examiners with large organization frames of reference should be very careful not to apply operational and procedural requirements associated with large organizations as they review small organization applications.

Some guidelines are given below for understanding the context for reviewing a small organization:

- Small organization applicants are defined as those with 500 or fewer full-time employees. Also noteworthy is the significant difference in resource availability between a 450-person organization and a 50-person organization.
- Social responsibility and community involvement must be viewed in the context of the applicant's size. A large organization might have impacts on a national or international basis; a small organization will frequently focus its involvement on a local community.
- The issues of fiscal and managerial accountability, ethical behavior, and legal compliance are as pertinent to a small organization as they are to a large one, and the responses of management to these issues are equally important. A small organization, however, will necessarily address these issues in the context of its size, ownership (many are privately held or family owned), and responsibilities. Good governance practices are still an imperative.
- While large organizations frequently have complex computer and information systems for data management, a small organization (depending upon how small) may perform data and information management with a combination of personal computer- or workstation-based data management systems and manual methods.
- Due to limited staff and funding resources, benchmarking and competitive comparison information in a small organization environment may be based largely on literature/trade association information and comparisons with best practices in the local geographic area.
- In the context of a small organization, systems for workforce involvement and process management may rely more on informal verbal communication than on formal written communication and documentation. However, all applicants have the same requirement to demonstrate that their processes are repeatable, can produce the desired results, and are deployed fully and systematically throughout the organization.
- The ability of a small organization to leverage key suppliers, particularly large suppliers, should be viewed in the context of staff availability and the volume of business that it does with the suppliers.
- The ability of a small organization to obtain customer and market knowledge through independent third-party surveys, commissioned studies, extensive interviews, or focus group techniques is limited by its resources. The important consideration for Examiners is to assess whether the applicant, given its resources, is using appropriate mechanisms to gather and use information to improve its customer focus and satisfaction.
- The expectation that large organizations will segment their results data with regard to various customer and workforce segments may require modification in small organizations, depending on the complexity of these groups and the level of resources needed to gather and analyze the data.